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●777 No home was really furnished until it had a small wooden iconostas which contained an icon, a picture of the Virgin or a saint. The iconostas was usually placed in the east or southeast corner of the room. In case some disaster befell the family, they found out to which saint the unlucky day belonged, and got a picture of him for their iconostas. Thereafter, on his name day they did no work and used holy water in the house. In the *kandilo,* the small lamp before the icon, they burned olive oil during church time and on the eve of holidays. In case the family had used holy water at home in the hope of curing some sick person, the flowers with which the water had been sprinkled were placed on the household shrine.

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285 Usually there were a number of small implements or articles scattered about the room. A two-edged axe might be leaning against the door frame, and old clothes or bed clothes hanging from a long thick pole in a corner. I often saw in common use small baskets obtained from the gypsies. For pay, the gypsies asked the purchaser to fill the basket with beans or wheat, which they retained. The peasants themselves, especially the shepherds and goatherds with much leisure on their hands, made the very large baskets or hampers used for carrying hay or straw. These baskets stood in the entryway or hung under the eaves.

312 Only a few of the Dragalevtsy homes had a washstand, but even for these the water had to be carried from the nearest fountain. Over and over again the peasant women would say:

"We would like to have running water in our houses because it would help us a lot and make our life a little easier. But we don't have the money, and all this needs much money for installing a water system in the house, and also we would have to pay quite a high tax to the Obshtina. Anyway, the fountains in the village are sufficient and it doesn't take us much time to go and get water."

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312 The water was carried from the fountains either in clay vessels called *stomni* or in the more modern large copper vessels called *mentsi.* The long sticks on the ends of which the water vessels were suspended were called *kobilitsi.* The water from the fountains was used only for preparing food and drinking, and the water for the animals came from the little brooks in the street. Maintaining personal cleanliness was

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796 578 parents' hands and ask pardon for past misbehavior, and all day long there had been a wandering in and out of homes by men to meet some other men with whom they had been at odds, and by a handshake to ask pardon.

I came into the tavern late in the afternoon of that day. It was snowing heavily and the warmth from the stove felt good. Near me sat a man rubbing his chilled hands. After we had exchanged formal greetings, I asked him where he was going, the usual village question.

"I'm going back to my village, eleven miles farther on."

"Where have you been?"

"I've been over to Durvanitsa [two miles away] to visit my parents and beg their forgiveness."

"Have you had any trouble with your parents during the past year that would make you take such a long walk in such bad weather?"

Patient with me, a foreigner, he said, "No, I've had no troubles with my parents. I've been to visit them. That is the custom."

A little later he went out into the snow to resume his eleven-mile tramp back home. His heart was at ease, for he had fulfilled the age-old custom of *Sirni Nedelya* (Cheese Sunday).

796 The Saturday following Cheese Sunday was *Todorovden* (the day of St. Theodore, patron saint of horses). Then the children stopped fasting, for their young bodies could not stand seven weeks of a milkless diet. Early in the morning they, together with some of the old people, took communion in the village church. Many of the young men visited the village of Gorna Banya, which had its *Subor* on *Todorovden*. There was a great deal of horseback riding and racing up and down the muddy village streets, in honor of St. Theodore and "to protect the horses from worms."

Eight days before Easter was the Saturday called *Lazarovden* (St. Lazarus's Day). *Lazarki* groups, consisting of six girls each, went from house to house to sing and dance, according to the villagers in honor of the resurrection of Lazarus. They were given coins and eggs by the peasants who believed that these girls would bring them good luck in the months to come.

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527 This was the peasant version of the Sabbath being made for man, not
857 man for the Sabbath.

One holiday which children particularly enjoyed was New Year's Day, which, like Christmas, came two weeks later than our own because of the Old Style Calendar still in use by the church. Boys and girls were up at break of day to tap every passer-by with a gaily decorated branch of a cornel cherry tree. As they tapped they chanted:

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Fresh, fresh New Year
Happiness to the end.
Let mother and father be healthy
Like the past year!

Striking with a cornel-twig higher than the cap;
Wishing you a houseful of corn,
Yellow as the gold,
To ripen early, early in
The fields during the summer.

Let wedding guests again pass by
With full wine casks
To present us with white kerchiefs
And embroidered belts.

Fresh, fresh New Year,
Let us get sister married! . . .

With this chant they wished good health. In return they expected
• [777] a coin or something to eat. This tapping continued until nightfall. Most members of the family looked sleepy during the day because they had stayed up late the night before to gamble. Their success or failure on New Year's Eve was supposed to foretell what luck the new year had in store.

Early in the morning the older boys and girls told fortunes by gathering around a copper kettle in which each one had placed some identifying article, such as a ring or knife. The group sang a song, connected with some occupation, while one token was drawn from the pot. If a boy's token was drawn, the occupation described would be his; if a girl's token was drawn, then she would marry a man engaged in that occupation. After this they all danced the *horo*.

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Epiphany or Bogoyavlenie on January 19 commemorated the baptism of Christ. The Dragalevtsy boys and girls knew how the day was celebrated in other villages near the rivers or the sea. There the altar cross was thrown into the icy water. Naked youths dove in and struggled violently for it. The winner, carrying the cross, then collected money from the crowd. More important even than the money was the feeling that he would be fortunate during the coming year. But Epiphany did not pass unnoticed in Dragalevtsy, even though the river was nothing more than a racing mountain brook. The priest brought the cross out to sell at auction. The buyer, of course, returned it to the priest, but with his purchase received the assurance of God's blessing in the days to come. One year, a hiker happened to be passing through on his way up to the top of Vitosha. He saw the crowd gathered around the priest, bought the cross, went to the tavern for a free drink, returned the cross to the priest, and went on his way up the mountain. Peasants marveled for some time afterwards over the dispatch he showed in the whole affair.

Formerly on this day, children were christened with cold instead of lukewarm water, and all brides of that year were bathed in the river. When I asked why such custom was no longer practiced, Bai Angel, the village registrar, shrugged: "Oh, then the people were stronger and could stand such treatment."

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On the previous day the children had all awaited the priest's arrival to sprinkle holy water in every room of the house. As we have already seen, many families collected bottles of the water that had been especially blessed for Epiphany, in the belief that it would cure various illnesses later on.

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Bulgarian boys and girls never celebrated their birthdays. Instead, they made much of their name days. Each child bore the name of some saint, with a special day on the church calendar. Each Ivan (John) celebrated on the day following Epiphany, January 20; each Grigor (Gregory) on February 7; each Iliya (Elijah) on August 2. And so it ran throughout the year. Those with names not appearing on the calendar generally chose the day of "The Forty Holy Martyrs." Whereas Americans would expect to receive gifts on their birthdays, Bulgarians, especially those who were married, expected to entertain